



lighthouse
church

Men and Women in Ministry Together

Men and Women are equals

Men and women are equals.

Men and women have both been *created in God's image*. They are created to both rule over all of creation. Therefore, men and women are unique and different in nature to the rest of the animals God created, but together, they are equal in importance to God.¹ This role of ruling is continued for both men and women who are 'in Christ', and will rule in the new creation.²

Being in God's image also means both men and women were made to have a relationship with God in a way that animals are not.³ Jesus came as a human, to represent and redeem humans: 'there is one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus'.⁴ Jesus had to become a person to redeem people, because an animal was not sufficient.⁵

Jesus redeems both men and women. There is no distinction between men and women. Both are rebellious to God and sinful.⁶ Both are saved by Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection and faith is required by both to take hold of this salvation.⁷ As Galatians so clearly says, 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there *male and female*, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.⁸ And as a result, both men and women, in Christ, are adopted as *sons*, that is, heirs of the inheritance.⁹

And since we are united to Christ, both men and women are part of one united body. The distinction in this body is not between men or women, rather the only distinction is between those who have different gifts, which are to be exercised to maintain the unity of Christ's body, the Church.¹⁰ We are both co-workers with Christ in growing his Church, seen in Paul naming Priscilla and Aquila and others, as such.¹¹

Men and women are both in God's image, sinful, saved, part of Christ's body, work for Christ and will rule with Christ. There are no second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God. There is equality, and there is also distinction.

Men and women are different

God has created men and women as different. Only women can be daughters, sisters, wives and mothers. And God desires that his people treat women in a way that is different to men. Timothy as a man, was to treat people differently: young men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.¹² Women are weaker physically and are to be treated well by physically stronger men, which is especially significant considering the sinful way men have treated women sexually.¹³

¹ Genesis 1:26-28

² Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 22:5. 2 tim 2:12. See also 1 Cor 6:1-3 as judges.

³ Genesis 2:20 only Eve was suitable for Adam. They are of a different 'nature' to the animals.

⁴ 1 Timothy 2:5

⁵ Hebrews 10:4

⁶ Romans 3:9-12, 23

⁷ Romans 3:3:24-25

⁸ Galatians 3:28

⁹ Galatians 4:6-7

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:1-13

¹¹ Romans 16:3. See also 16:7, 12 of those who worked with Paul.

¹² 1 Timothy 5:1-2

¹³ 1 Peter 3:7

This difference between man and woman is something God has created and declared as good.¹⁴ The difficulty today is that our culture sees difference as a potential for abuse, and society also believes that if there is any difference, along with order and submission between men and women, that necessarily means men and women are unequal.¹⁵

Relationship, order, submission and equality

Our society believes that if someone submits to someone else, they must be inferior. That is not necessarily the case. For example, if I submit to a policeman regarding traffic rules, that does not make me inferior to the policeman. The policeman is performing a certain role, which means that I need to submit, but it does not make me a lesser person.

More importantly, we see submission within God himself. Jesus submits to his Father in going to the cross.¹⁶ The Spirit's aim is to glorify Jesus.¹⁷ Although the Father, Jesus and The Spirit are all God, they have different roles. We see this order clearly within the Trinity in 1 Corinthians 11:3 'Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.' So, although there is order and submission within the Trinity, it does not mean that the Spirit or the Son are lesser persons. Father, Son and Spirit are all God and equal in worth and importance, even though there is submission. They simply have different roles. They are equal but different. This equality and difference is also seen with man and woman in creation and the fall in Genesis.

Man and Woman in Genesis: order, submission and equality

It is important to consider the differences in roles in Genesis 1-2 because they go beyond cultural differences of different peoples. We see the original pair God made and his plans for humanity for all time regardless of culture. We've already seen their equality above in being in God's image, as rulers of the world.

Yet there is also a difference in their role. Man was created first, and from his side comes woman, who is to be his helper.¹⁸ In addition, man names 'woman' showing the order and authority that Adam had over Eve (like Adam had over the rest of creation in verse 20). And this order between man and woman is a loving harmony that the New Testament draws on many times when discussing the roles of husband and wives within marriage and the Church.

Tragically this God-ordained order was damaged and marred in Genesis 3. In creation, God establishes an order: God, then man, then woman, then other creation.¹⁹ At the Fall in Genesis 3, this is reversed. Satan, who is the snake²⁰, deceives Eve²¹. Eve then leads Adam by giving him the fruit.²² We have Satan leading Eve, leading Adam, who blames God.²³

Yet even with the roles reversed we see who is meant to be leading whom. Even though Eve was the one to take the fruit, God holds man accountable for the sin, since he was designated the leader in the relationship. He is questioned by God in verse 9, and the rest of humanity is described as being sinful, because we are 'in Adam'.²⁴

As a result, humanity is cursed, yet the curses are different for man and woman, because our roles are different.²⁵ Part of the curse is the woman's desire for her husband. This is not a sexual desire, but a desire to rule over her husband, like we see sin desiring to rule over Cain in the next chapter²⁶, who murdered his brother Abel. Instead of willingly submitting, Eve will struggle with it, by desiring to rule her husband. Since that day, tension in the roles between genders has continued.

Man and Woman in the New Testament

The leadership of men continued in Jesus' time. We see that when Jesus chose his disciples, he chose men. It was not that women were unimportant, as they also had a role in his ministry.²⁷ However Jesus chose twelve men to be apostles,

¹⁴ Genesis 1:26-28 and

¹⁵ As with many teachings in the Scripture, this is not one to divide over, yet it often does reveal the way we read the Bible.

¹⁶ Luke 22:42

¹⁷ John 16:14-16

¹⁸ Gen 2:18-23

¹⁹ Genesis 1-2

²⁰ Revelation 12:9, 20:2.

²¹ Gen 3:2-4

²² Gen 3:6

²³ Genesis 3:12

²⁴ Romans 5:12-17; 1 Cor 15:20-22.

²⁵ Gen 3:14-29

²⁶ The word for 'desire' is the same in the original Hebrew in Gen 2:16 and 4:7

²⁷ Women supported Jesus' ministry Luke 8:1-3 and were close friends as well Luke 10:38-39. Moreover, Jesus went against culture norms by teaching women theology Luke 10:38-42; 23:27-31 John 20:10-18.

reserving senior leadership of God's people for men. He was not going just with social customs, seen by him choosing a traitor and tax collector for one of his twelve,²⁸ which would have been more scandalous than choosing a woman.

Jesus also reaffirms the Genesis description of marriage between man and woman.²⁹ Nothing has changed since God created man and woman.

The Jesus ordained the apostle Paul, who continued Jesus' teaching. The 1 Corinthians 11 passage quoted above again shows the headship of the man over the woman, and their different roles assigned by God.

Yet even though they have different roles, women are to be greatly involved in Christian ministry. Women are to pray³⁰ and prophesy in church,³¹ and be involved in many other ministries with men.³²

In addition, older women are to teach younger women³³ and mothers and grandmothers are to teach children as Lois and Eunice did.³⁴ This role should never be under-emphasised as mothers along with fathers³⁵ should see the teaching of their children as vitally important.

Women are vitally involved in much Christian ministry, yet God has reserved the role of 'teaching and leading' churches for men, not because they are worth more, but because they have a different role to play.

The Apostle Paul had instructed Timothy to stay in Ephesus to command certain men not to teach false teachings.³⁶ Rather he was to teach sound doctrine.³⁷ The letter is written so that 'people ought to know how to conduct themselves in God's household which is the church of the living God'.³⁸ Part of what Timothy was to teach was that women should not get concerned with what they are wearing or dress in an inappropriate way,³⁹ while men were meant to take seriously the call to pray, rather than fighting.⁴⁰

In addition, Paul tells Timothy that women should not try and be in the role that God has reserved for men, for the good of his church. He says:

'2:9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10 but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. 11 A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15 But women will be saved through childbearing-- if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. 3:1 Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?).'⁴¹

In commanding how the church should function, God commands women to be quiet and submissive in church (2:9). And she is not to teach a man (2:12). The word 'to teach' in the pastoral letters is used to mean the passing on of the apostolic teaching. God desires for men to serve in this role.⁴² The word for 'authority' only occurs here in the Bible and is likely to be referring to what Paul describes in chapter 3: the overseer/leader. God's desire is for men only to serve in this way.

²⁸ Matthew 9:9-13

²⁹ Mark 10:1-12

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

³¹ 1 Corinthians 14:26-36. Much more could be said on the word 'prophecy'.

³² We see this in women being involved in ministry with men in things like: leadership, administration, hospitality, crèche, kids church, women's growth groups, teaching, 1-1, evangelism.

³³ Titus 2:3-5

³⁴ 2 Tim 1:5.

³⁵ Ephesians 6:1-4

³⁶ 1 Timothy 1:2

³⁷ 1 Timothy 4:13

³⁸ 1 Timothy 3:15

³⁹ 1 Timothy 2:9

⁴⁰ 1 Timothy 2:8

⁴¹ 1 Timothy 2:11-3:5

⁴² 1 Tim 4:13, 16; 6:2; 2 Timothy 1:14; 4:2; Titus 2:1, 7

And the reason Paul gives for this is not simply cultural. Paul refers back to Adam and Eve, the first two created people (2:13-14). Adam was formed first and is therefore to be the leader. However, in contrast to that, Eve was the one deceived, when she reversed the God ordained order in Genesis 3. Rather than trying to teach and have authority over men, Paul says women should strive to be mothers (2:15).⁴³

It is worth noting that in this leading role, men are to be the teachers and leaders/overseers. However, there are instances that men and women can discuss the Bible and 'teach each other'.⁴⁴ This would be like a man and woman chatting over morning tea about the Bible and the man understanding something from what the woman says, or is like a man or woman being taught as s/he hears songs being sung. Yet this is different to the teaching that is given to the whole church of 'one person to many'. In addition, women do lead in multiple areas in church, in appropriate ways like leading 'teams'.⁴⁵

So, God says that within church a man is to be the teacher and leader/overseer. And this connection is reinforced when we see that church is a big version of family. In 1 Timothy 3:15 Paul says that church is the household or family of God. And so those who lead/manage the big church family should be able to lead/manage their biological family.⁴⁶ Leading the biological family gives credibility to being able to lead the larger church family, both of which are the responsibility and authority of the man.

This responsibility of leadership for men is clearly seen in Ephesians 5:21-6:9. Paul is describing the different order of relationships between husband and wife, parents and children, and masters and slaves. There is an appropriate order between parents and children, masters and slaves and likewise husband and wives. In all three of these relationships there is one in each pair that submits. God desires wives to submit to their husbands like the Church submits to Jesus, because the husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. And husbands are to love their wives. There is order in the marriage relationship, like there is order between slaves and masters, children and parents. The Church does not lead Jesus, but submits. Likewise the wife does not lead her husband but submits.

Therefore, a man is to be leader of his wife (the biological family in Ephesians 5 and 1 Timothy 3:4-5), as well as being the leader of the Church family.⁴⁷ It would be a reversal of roles if the man is clearly the head of his biological family, but then submits to a woman in the church family. From the beginning of creation, God has desired that men are the leaders in their families and consequentially leaders of the Church.

At Lighthouse Church, every Christian is a minister or servant, and all ministries are vital to allow the body of Christ to grow.⁴⁸ Yet since we believe that God knows the best way to grow his church and for families to function, we desire to follow what his says in his Word, the Bible.

Much of our society has been influenced by a different view of roles and worth. It is believed that you get your worth from what you do, rather than who you are. This can lead to the belief that only the people up front are important or valuable. Jesus thinks otherwise. Value is not determined by function or role. We are valuable, male or female, because we are created in his image. And for believers, we are loved since we have been saved by Christ. As his followers we want to love and obey him, and we do that by obeying his Word, the Bible, which shows how to have a relationship with him, and how to live.

Many times we may need to be counter-cultural in our thinking. The roles of men and women is one of them. And we trust that Jesus, rather than the world, will lead us in the best possible way. So at Lighthouse Church we will have women involved in many, many ministries, including leadership in different ways, and they will also teach the Bible to women and children. Those who teach men and women in Church on Sundays and in mixed Growth Groups, and those who will lead the Church will be men. If you'd like to see more of men and women's involvement in leadership at Lighthouse please see the article: Leadership in the New Testament and at Lighthouse Church.

According to God's good design men and women are equal and the same in many ways. They are also different in some ways, and we rejoice at this goodness God has given us and seek to express this well.

⁴³ This does not negate the fact that some women will work, as seen in Proverbs 31:10ff and Lydia in Acts 16:14

⁴⁴ Col 3:16

⁴⁵ At Lighthouse, women are leaders of teams, and leaders of leaders. You may also wish to see Lighthouse Leadership paper.

⁴⁶ 1 Timothy 3:4-5. the same original Greek word is used for family/household in 3:4-5 and 3:15.

⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 3:2. A man is the overseer, as he is a husband

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31